QUICK CURES FOR SICK SEWING MACHINES

By Jessie L. Hutton

Not all sewing machine problems are mechanical in nature. Some you can solve yourself with a simple adjustment. This performance check list will help you diagnose and correct minor problems—and avoid what might be some unnecessary service calls.

What if your sewing machine runs but won't make a stitch? Check the threading—thread guides, tension, and take-up lever may not be threaded in the proper order. Or the needle may not be threaded in the right direction. If you have just recently put in a new needle, you may not have done so correctly. Consult the manual that came with your machine for proper threading instructions.

Does your machine make a loose stitch with loops on the underside? If so, it may be the upper tension threading. Sometimes thread gets behind the tension disks rather than between them. Make sure the thread you are using passes under the fine wire spring called the take-up spring. Check the bobbin. The thread may be pulling off very hard or heavy. If the bobbin case is the removable type, it may not be seated in the proper position.

What if the hand wheel will not turn, and the needle will not go up and down? Examine the bobbin case for tangled threads. To free the machine and make the needle come up, force the hand wheel back (away from you). This backward force will usually break or cut the threads that are jammed in the bobbin case. Remove all thread pieces before you try to stitch; otherwise another thread jam may occur.

What if the hand wheel turns but the needle will not go up and down? Check the stop-motion screw that is located at the hand wheel—you may have forgotten to tighten it the last time you wound on a bobbin.

What if the needle thread frays and breaks above the fabric you are stitching? Check the needle—it may have a sharp eye that is cutting the thread, or the needle may be too fine for the thread. It may be the tension is too tight for the work. The thread guides and take-up lever should be checked for rust, roughness, or sharpness.

Does the needle break frequently when stitching? If so, the needle may be too fine for the thread or fabric, especially when stitching across heavy seams. Check the needle for length to see if it is the correct style for your machine. The presser foot may be loose or it may be bent enough to interfere with the needle. Check your hand position while stitching. You may be pulling the fabric and bending the needle.

What if the machine will not run at all? Check the lead cord that is attached to your machine—be sure it is plugged into a live outlet. Many calls for service are made when nothing more is needed than the proper electric current.

Most sewing machines respond well to proper care and adjustment. If your machine still does not function to your complete satisfaction after you have made a careful check on it yourself, then you should obtain professional help. Ask for a written repair estimate in advance so that you will know exactly what is involved.